

To my Great American Friends,

On Saturday morning, May 27th, 46 years ago, Sally was in labor at Northside Hospital with Tyler. I rushed away from the father's waiting room to pick up tickets from a friend's mailbox for the Bell South Atlanta Golf Classic, played for many years at Atlanta Country Club. Sadly, I had missed Tyler's birth.

Beginning at the age of ten, Tyler was a standard-bearer at the Atlanta Classic for several years. The coincidence of my having left the labor room precisely ten years earlier to pick up Classic tickets is a regret I often fathom.

We all have historical moments when we would have liked to "Play it Again, Sam."

The "Tyler labor" incident pales in comparison to others. Tyler was always the curious/adventuresome one. He wanted to be involved in all things good and right, like being a standard-bearer at a professional golf event. I vividly recall his "bearing the standard" for Larry Nelson when he won in 1988.

From an early age, he maintained a characteristic, always asking me, "Should I do this or that?"

"Dad, I have been invited to be a standard-bearer at the Atlanta Classic. Would you drive me there?" was his way of cleverly posing a question in pursuit of a positive response.

Often being asked for my fatherly advice, there is one question I have remembered for my lifetime. Had I offered different "Tyler advice" when he called me late one Saturday afternoon, he might be alive today. He was training at Fort Benning in "Tank School" to become a "Tank Commander," his chosen MOS, when he asked.....

"Dad, we just received notice that tryouts for Ranger School will be held at 0600 in the morning."

"If you do that, you'll miss church," I mused.

"Seriously, do you think I should try to become a Ranger, an Airborne Ranger?" he asked.

After some mumbo jumbo, I asked, "If you succeed, you will be assigned to an Airborne Infantry Battalion and eventually end up somewhere in combat?" "But if you feel compelled to take on perhaps the most difficult challenge of your lifetime, go for it!"

And he did. He was one of fewer than 25% of the candidates to complete his Ranger School, followed by 50+ jumps before and during a year in Korea, a redeployment into Kuwait, and then into Iraq. Tyler was killed two weeks later by enemy gunfire in Ramadi, Iraq.

What if I had said emphatically, "NO, don't do that!" However, as per usual, I agreed with his judgment. Had I not, he would likely have taken my advice and be alive today.

Spiritually, I believe "All things happen for a reason. There are no coincidences in life."

I suppose "Honoring Tyler by Honoring Others" is a worthwhile "earthly reason;" however, I eagerly/anxiously await the "heavenly one."

Wishing you and yours a blessed Memorial Day,

Carey